

How to Grow Strong in the Faith, Part 2

Luke 9:42-43

Look at verse 42, "While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground, convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father." There's the evidence. How does that evidence strengthen the faith of those who believe? How does that evidence teach the disciples? What are they to learn, here? What should we learn from this? Listen, this is nothing less than the evidence of Christ's glory. We see his glory on display, here. We can see his glory, we can put it in three parts for your notes, maybe three sub-points, A, B, and C.

Subpoint B: Christ is glorified in divine power. Divine power. Luke's summary, here, is not Jesus cast out the demon. It's Jesus healed the boy. Healed the boy. It's no small feat. I mean, it's effortless for the all-powerful, omnipotent, divine Son of God, but it's quite a feat of strength from our perspective, from our point of view. Mark tells us that after

the demon came out of the boy, "the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, 'He is dead.'"

No wonder, right? After the demon has ravaged this boy's body, he's dead! "But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, up, and he arose." This is life from the dead! This is effectively a resurrection miracle. And I love the fact that Je, that Luke, here, doesn't just tell us about the exorcism, Jesus' authority to cast out the demon, and then leave it there. Luke is sure to mention that Jesus healed the boy. Perhaps it's his sensitivity as a physician, but everybody gets the point. All the crowd that's there get the point that day. Jesus' power is evidenced not just in demon possession but in a holistic healing.

Subpoint C: Christ is glorified in divine mercy. He's glorified in divine mercy. "Jesus," last phrase there, "Jesus gave him back to his father." It's precious. What started with the father's plea ends with Jesus' answer of compassion and mercy to the father. And Luke is the only Gospel writer who adds this small but crucially important detail: "He gave him back to his father."

Listen, that is the point of the miracle, isn't it? To restore that relationship, to reconnect the son to his father and the father to his son. With a resurrected, healed body, the boy now has the capacity to learn from his father. Think about that as a parent and your relationship with your children. Think about that as a grandparent and your relationship with your grandchildren.

You're there to communicate wisdom to them. You're there to raise them, to teach them, to instruct them. Those children need you. And just because they're now parents, raising their own children, any parents, can I get an Amen, how much you need the wisdom of your elders to raise those children.

The father has been stabilized in his faith. He's been strengthened in his believing. And now the boy can communicate with his dad. He can interact with him. He can learn from him. He can grow for himself in knowing Jesus the Christ, who healed him. And as we mentioned earlier, in order to learn from his

father, that's why Jesus needed to teach this father, to correct his error, to solidify his faith, so he has something to teach.

Listen, Jesus is not just a healer of bodies. He's a healer of hearts. His concern goes way beyond flesh and blood. It goes way beyond circumstance and situation. He's looking at issues of reconciliation. He's bringing together; he's uniting. Jesus wants to see this father in proper relationship with God in order that he'll be effective to teach his own son, to raise his own son in the fear and admonition of the Lord. I mean, what good is a restored son if he dies at the end and goes to hell? What good is a restoration of a, a whole, physical body if our eternal soul suffers in torment?

So having experienced the love of God, having seen the power of his compassion, this father has a living faith. He has a strengthened faith. He has something, now, to pass on and to teach. This is all about the goodness of God. And physical suffering, there's nothing like physical suffering, or you could say trials, relational problems. There's nothing like, like financial concerns and issues, nothing like that to make us vulnerable to the temptation to distrust the goodness of God.

Physical suffering, health issues, afflictions, maladies, diseases severe and crippling, all of that, you'll find people turning to all kinds of false promises and faith healers, financial counselors, all that, because they reason like this: If God is a God of love, and if God is good, and if God can heal, then certainly he wants me or my loved one to be healed. He wouldn't want this suffering to continue any longer if he's loving and if he's good.

This is connected to what's called the problem of evil. The fact that God IS, and at the same time evil and suffering exists in the world. In light of God's love and goodness, in light of his power to do something about it, why does evil exist? The formal attempt to get God off the hook is called, theodicy. Literally, that means the justification of God. We have a hard time figuring out how God can be all-good and all-loving and all-powerful, and at the same time tolerate evil and suffering and harm and pain, to us his creatures, especially those, to those who seem so weak and vulnerable, like children.

So what's the answer? How do we get God off the hook, so to speak? Well, first, we need to say, we need to say emphatically that God does not need us to get him off the hook for anything. "Has not the potter right over the clay?" God doesn't need us to justify him or to justify his actions.

In fact, God leans into that. He takes full responsibility, asserting the absolute right of his divine sovereignty, Isaiah 45:5-7: "I am the Lord, and there is no other. Besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, there is no other." Get this: "I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity. I am the Lord, who does all these things."

Did you hear that? God makes well-being on the one hand, and he creates calamity on the other. Why? The text answers the question for us. So that we will know that there is no other God besides him. Why is that? So that we'll look to no other source for answers, for help, for salvation. Why? Because there is no other salvation. And that's why the problem of evil is really not a problem for any Christian. The problem of evil is a

problem for anybody who denies God. It's a real problem for them. There is no other salvation; there is no other hope.

The very next chapter, Isaiah 46:9-10, God tells us, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" And you know what? He uses well-being and calamity to accomplish all his good purpose. What's the purpose that he intends to accomplish? The glorification of himself. The glorification of the only true and living God. And for us, for those whom he favors, he leads them to salvation in his son Jesus Christ. For us, for those who believe in Christ, his purpose is a saving purpose. It's a redeeming purpose, a reconciling purpose. It's all good. It's all grace.

So coming back to trials and afflictions, severe chronic issues, health conditions, even crippling and debilitating illnesses, injuries, diseases, how do we understand those things in light of God's greater purposes for his glory, for our eternal salvation? Well, clearly, since God is all-good, and since he is all-loving, and since he is all-powerful, then

clearly, God has an all-good, all-loving, all-wise purpose in allowing any suffering we experience to continue. Yes, not just in allowing, but in planning. He sends trial. He sends affliction. Why? To get our eyes off of any human solution, off of any solution in the world, that we look wholly and completely to him.

One of the main purposes of God in sending trials into our lives, one of his good and wise purposes, is to expose what's in our hearts regarding our view of him. Do we believe him truly to be good, or do we not? Do we believe him to be good and consistently so, or do we waver in that?

You may remember when Dr. John Street preached here last summer. Very powerfully illustrated this point. He said our hearts are like a full sponge, filled with something, and it's only by squeezing that sponge, by putting pressure on it, that whatever's in the sponge comes pouring out. When the pressure of trial and suffering is on, and when the healing doesn't come, what comes out of your heart? Trust in God's love and goodness? Rest in his wisdom and judgment? Confidence in the perfection of his plan for your life? Or is it something else?



You say, Okay, you've convinced me. That makes perfect sense. I get it. I see it. I trust God; I'll continue to trust God. But then you ask, Look, just for the sake of understanding, not to complain against God's goodness and wisdom, not to find fault with him, not to get him to justify himself, the Creator to the creature. Far be it from me. That's not what I want, but I still want to understand why did the people in Jesus' day received such dramatic gifts of healing grace, yet we don't?

Because, beloved, God wants us to see himself revealed in Christ. And sometimes it's a perspective of history that reveals with more clarity what happened at a certain time. Most of Jesus' generation killed him. You want to be part of that generation? Or would you have it all written plain for you in the book, written in Scripture with the divine interpreter, the Holy Spirit, revealing it to you and explaining it to you and helping you to understand?

God wants us to see himself revealed in Christ. He wants us to see his heart of mercy and compassion in healing. In Christ,

he wants his power to truly do something about our suffering, to be known. God wants us to know that this evil world, this suffering due to the curse, this groaning over sin, the pain, the sorrow, this is not what is going to last forever. Salvation is coming. We just need to hold on a little while longer, trusting in him.

“For we know,” Paul writes, “that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we await eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

Christ came to reveal God. He came to show us who he is and what he is like. And during the time of his sojourn on earth, during the time of his first advent, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus. He anointed him to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent him “to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of

sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And the good news of the Lord's favor culminated at the cross. It's the watershed of God's redeeming purposes, the center point of God's self-glorifying work, the cross, the suffering. Suffering we face under the curse of the Law, it points us to the fulness of grace and truth in Jesus Christ.

And so, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." Getting you out of whatever trial you're in, that's not the point. Steadfastness is the point. "Let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

That's what we're to learn, beloved. Right now. That's what's we need to learn when Jesus and his Apostles are not here to heal our diseases and to re, relieve our physical suffering. We're to trust that God's eye is still on the broken-hearted. His compassion is still for the suffering and, and afflicted.

We're to look to Christ, put our hope in what we do not yet see, wait for it patiently.

Pray. Pray that God would heal. Pray that God would restore because God still does that. He doesn't do it through Jesus and the Apostles, physical touch, immediate, full, comprehensive, like this boy. But does he heal? Sure, he heals. Pray for that. It's good, it's right. Looks to him in dependence and hope. Look, when God says, Wait awhile, when God says, No, ride this one out, look, Christ shows us all our suffering has a good end. Our suffering will eventuate in eternal glory.

Beloved, it's through the eyes of faith, with a believing heart, anchored into the goodness of God, it's with the eyes of faith that look to a good and perfect and faithful God, that's how we're going to remain steadfast in faith. That's how we're going to grow stronger in faith when we consider the evidence of Christ's glory manifest in his authority, his power, and in his mercy.

How do we consider that? Well, by reading God's Word daily so we can reflect deeply on his Word, think carefully about what he's written, meditate prayerfully on the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ came to teach us what God is like, and if we'll study his works, if we'll study his ways, if we'll think carefully, meditate prayerfully, react humbly in repentance and believing trust, we're going to stand firm in faith. We're going to grow stronger in faith. We're gonna mature in faith. That's what needs to happen.

Second point. Second point to remain steadfast and grow strong in faith. Number two, listen to the testimony of Christ's majesty. Listen to the testimony of Christ's majesty. Just briefly, look at the beginning of verse 43, see how Luke records the reaction of the crowd. It says, "And all were astonished at the majesty of God, and they were all marveling at everything he was doing."

The conclusion that the crowd comes to is important, it's important for us to think about. After seeing the kind of power that was on display in Jesus Christ, the authority, the mercy, they know that there is no other explanation for what they've

seen than what they call "the majesty of God." The word is *megaleiotes*, which we can, it calls attention to the demonstration of great power, in which case, majestic is a very appropriate translation. It can also refer to the straight, state of greatness of somebody that someone possesses, and so maybe grandeur of the person, majesty of the person. I think they're referring to both things, here. It's a majestic demonstration of power and also the majesty of the person wielding it.

The glory of God, so clearly evident and manifest in Christ, divine authority, transcendent power all combined with an immanence of compassion and mercy. The glory of his person and his work puts Jesus in a category that they know is outside creation. This is, this is something else. This is something, well, really, what believers understand, this is a non-created being. This is the Creator and sustainer of the universe. This is the Son of God. It's one who can only be described as sharing in the *megaleiotes*, greatness and majesty and glory of God.

And the people are utterly astonished and amazed, as well they should be. The verbs, here, of their reaction are

interesting. Verse, first verb, the ESV translates it as, as astonished. It's *exeplesso*. The, the people are absolutely amazed. They are overwhelmed *ast*, with astonishment, with amazement. They're stymied. Second word, second verb, *thaumazo*, indicates that people are marveling at everything Jesus, they're admiring his works, they're in awe. They're astonished at what he's doing, and they're wondering and marveling at the implications of all his works.

Just make a quick point, here. Folks, when, when was the last time that you stopped and thought about that? Have the narratives of the Bible become so familiar to you that you've become kind of become accustomed to the glory and amazement of God and the power of God, that this, this no longer amazes you?

Listen, if you're reading your Bible, and you're yawning through the creation of the world, or through the account of Israel's exodus from Egypt, or through the revelation of the law at Sinai, if you're maybe bored by the accounts of God's power demonstrated in the wilderness wanderings, the merciful provision of his people and also strong judgment, if you're unimpressed with prophetic judgments and promises of salvation,

particularly those things that concern Christ, what's written about fulfillment in Christ, my friend, you need to pray that God will awaken you.

You need to pray that God will lift your heart. Return to your Bible, and let your time of reading be saturated with prayer. When you find as you read your heart is cold and unmoved as it can be among us who are weak and inconsistent in faith, take that like, like nerve endings signaling to your body some kind of pain that means something's wrong. Mm! Hot! Oh, pull my hand away from flame. That's the idea.

When you see coldness, deadness, your heart unmoved, that's a nerve ending, a spiritual nerve ending. Let that drive you immediately to prayer, to say, God, something is wrong! I'm not amazed with your glory. I don't find joy and satisfaction and contentment in what's written about you. Something's, something's wrong. I believe. Help my unbelief.

Listen to the testimony to Christ's majesty, here, all the things he said and did, recorded in the Scripture. It's the



Apostle John that tells us, "There also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose the whole world itself could not contain the books that would be written." John says, though, the things are written down for us, they're written "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." When he says, "By believing you may have life in his name," the life he's referring to and writing about is not characterized by yawning and boredom and disinterest and indifference.

It is a life that gives power and energy. It bears fruit in our lives. So if you see fruitlessness in your life, oh, beloved, fall to your knees and beg God. He loves to answer those prayers. Ask, seek, and knock because who, for everyone who asks and seeks and knocks, God answers. We are invited, even commanded, to gaze full-on at the majesty of Christ, to listen to those who testify to it, to marvel at who he is and what he has done. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,'" He's, "shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."